M 29/5/986

background notes

Mali

United States Department of State
Bureau of Public Affairs

April 1986

NEWARK PUBLIC LIBRARY

AUG 8 1986

U. S. GOVT. PUBS.
DEPOSITORY 376

Official Name:
Republic of Mali

PROFILE

People

Nationality: *Noun and adjective*—Malian(s). **Population** (1985 est.): 7.5 million. **Annual growth rate:** 2.7%. **Ethnic groups:** Mande (Bambara or Bamana, Malinke, Sarakole) 50%, Peul 17%, Voltaic 12%, Songhai 6%, Tuareg and Moor 5%. **Religions:** Islam 90%, indigenous 9%, Christian 1%. **Languages:** French (official) and Bambara (spoken by about 80% of the population). **Education:** *Attendance*—28% (primary); 9% (secondary). **Literacy**—10%. **Health:** *Infant mortality rate*—152/1,000. *Life expectancy*—45 yrs. **Work force** (3.5 million): *Agriculture*—73%. *Industry and commerce*—12%. *Services*—16%.

Geography

Area: 1,204,278 sq. km. (465,000 sq. mi); about the size of Texas and California. **Cities:** *Capital*—Bamako (pop. 800,000). *Other cities*—Segou (75,000), Mopti (64,000), Kayes (45,000), Gao (37,000). **Terrain:** Savanna and desert. **Climate:** Ranges from semitropical to arid.

Government

Type: Republic. **Independence:** Sept. 22, 1960. **Constitution:** Approved by referendum June 2, 1974, and adopted in June 1979.

Branches: *Executive*—president (chief of state, head of government, and secretary general of the party). *Legislative*—unicameral National Assembly. *Judicial*—Supreme Court with both judicial and administrative powers.

Political parties: Mali is a single-party state governed by the Democratic Union of the Malian People (UDPM). **Suffrage:** Universal over 21.

Administrative subdivisions: 7 regions and capital district.

Central government budget (1986): $125.0 million.

Defense: 3% of GNP or 17% of central government expenditure.

Flag: Three vertical bands—green, yellow, and red—from left to right.

Economy

GDP (1981): $1.2 billion. **Annual growth rate** (1982–84): 1.5%. **Per capita income** (1984): $190. **Avg. inflation rate** (1982–84): 9.0%.

Natural resources: Gold, kaolin, salt, and limestone are currently exploited. Bauxite, iron ore, manganese, lithium, and uranium deposits are known or suspected but not exploited.

Agriculture (43% of GDP): *Products*—millet, sorghum, corn, rice, livestock, sugar, cotton, groundnuts (peanuts).

Industry (15% of GDP): *Types*—food processing, textiles, cigarettes, fish processing, metalworking.

Trade (1980): *Exports*—$175 million: cotton and cotton products, live animals, fish, tannery products, groundnuts. *Major markets*—France, FRG, UK, Ivory Coast, China, Senegal. *Imports*—$417 million: food, machinery, vehicles, petroleum products, chemicals and pharmaceuticals, textiles. *Major suppliers*—France, Ivory Coast, Senegal, China, FRG, Cuba, USSR, US ($4 million: industrial machinery, vehicles, spare parts, chemicals).

Official exchange rate (1986): CFA france 370 = US$1.

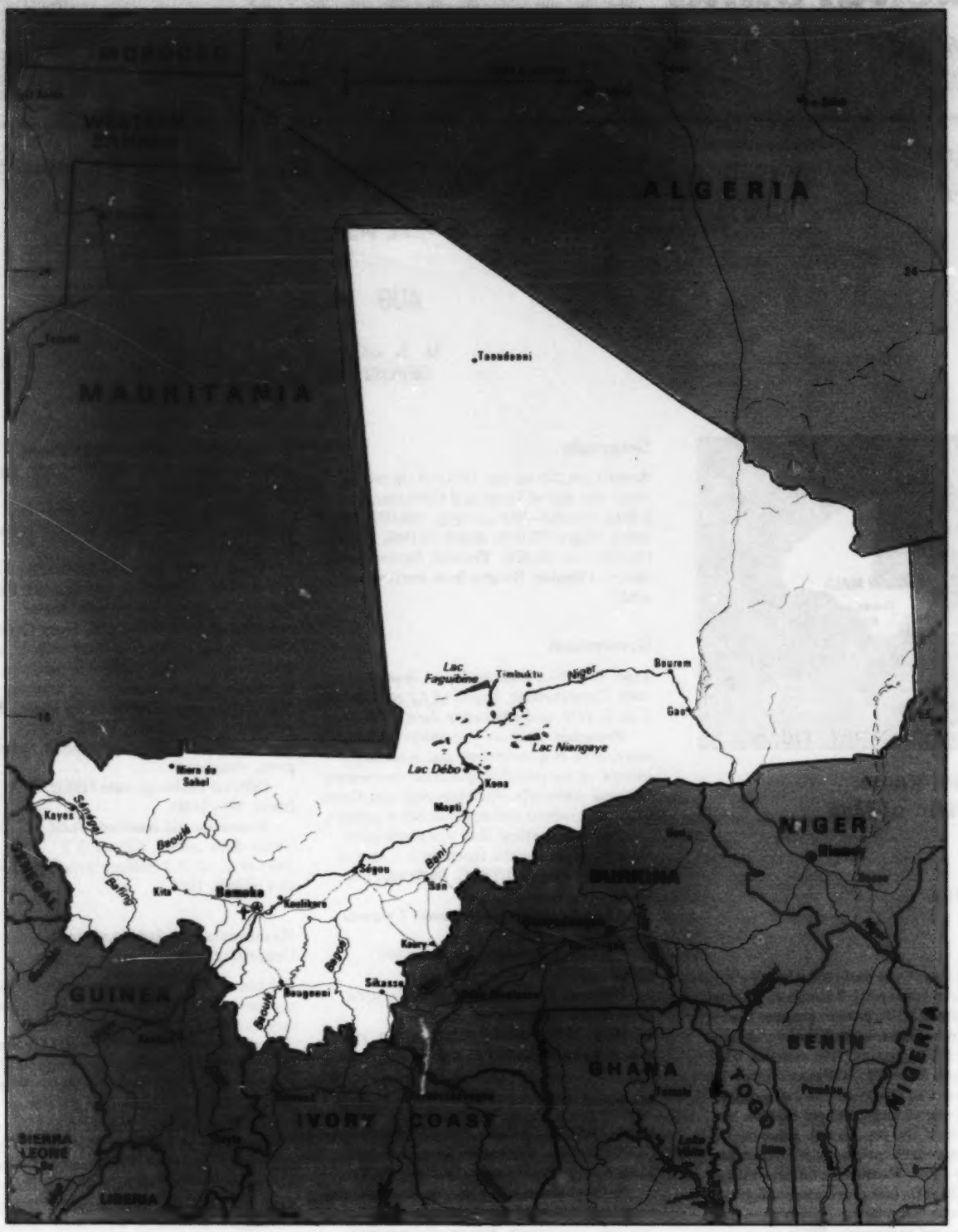
Economic aid received: *Total* (1981)—$203 million. *US aid* (FY 1960–1982)—$175.7 million, including PL-480; $8.4 million, 1983.

Membership in International Organizations

UN and several of its specialized and related agencies, including the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank; Organization of African Unity (OAU); Senegal River Valley Development Organization (OMVS); Liptako-Gourma Authority; West African Monetary Union (WAMU); West African Economic Community (CEAO); associate member of European Economic Community (EEC); Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS); African Development Bank (ADB); Niger River Commission; Nonaligned Movement; Permanent Interstate Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS); INTELSAT.

S 1.123:

Mali



Boundary representation is not necessarily authoritative

International boundary
National capital
Railroad
Road
International airport

GEOGRAPHY

Land-locked Mali is surrounded by former French territories. The productive part of the country lies below the Niger River in the West African savanna region, a transition zone between the coastal rain forest and the desert. The northern third of the country, north of Timbuktu, lies within the Sahara Desert and is sparsely settled.

Mali's climate is characterized by a short rainy season between mid-May and mid-October and a long dry season the rest of the year. Rainfall is heaviest and most regular in southeastern Mali (127 cm.—51 in.—per year) and falls off to occasional cloudbursts in the northern half of the country.

The terrain is flat throughout the country, although significant butte outcroppings exist in the west between Bamako and Kayes and in the area south and east of Mopti.

Mali has two large river systems. The Niger River and its tributaries drain the southern and southeastern portion of the country. Downstream from Mopti, the Niger flows into a delta, a vast system of channels and inland lakes that converge again as a single river near Timbuktu. Seasonal floods inundate the area and, when they retreat, leave damp areas for cultivation and pasture for livestock. The Niger is navigable from Koulikoro to Gao from mid-July to mid-December by large riverboats and most of the rest of the year by smaller craft. The Senegal River, which drains the western part of the country, flows through less productive agricultural land; it is the focus of an international river basin development effort.

(Courtesy: Amb. Parker W. Borg)

Women dressed for a festival in Bamako.

PEOPLE

Mali's population is fairly homogeneous, with the exception of desert nomads such as the Tuaregs and Moors, who are related to North African Berbers. The Tuaregs traditionally have opposed the authority of the central government at Bamako, although in recent years a reasonable accommodation seems to have been achieved.

For centuries, tribal intermingling has been facilitated by easy mobility on the savannas that characterize much of the country. Separate ethnic groups have pursued their traditional occupations in proximity to one another: the Bambara or Bamana, Malinke, Sarakole, and Voltaic as farmers; the Peul, Moor, and Tuareg as herders; and the Bozo as fishermen. Along the Niger River between Timbuktu and Gao, the Songhai are both farmers and fishermen, while the Tuaregs are herders.

Although each ethnic group speaks a separate language, nearly 80% of the Malians can communicate in Bambara, the common market language. The history of regular interactions among ethnic groups and a common understanding of Bambara have given Mali a legacy of relative harmony among its various peoples that is distinct among African states. No accurate statistics on Mali's entire ethnic composition are available.

Most Malians live in small towns and villages and engage in the traditional pursuits of farming, fishing, herding, crafts, and trade. Only about 16% live in communities of more than 5,000.

Mother and child—wood

Seated male figure with lance—wood

Bamana Figurative Sculpture

(Courtesy: The Metropolitan Museum of Art)

HISTORY

Mali is the cultural heir to the succession of ancient African empires—Ghana, Malinke, and Songhai—that occupied the West African savanna. These empires were well-organized political groupings that brought security and prosperity to large regions. They based their strength upon control of Saharan trade and were in touch with Mediterranean and Near Eastern centers of civilization.

Malians take great pride in being descendants of these ancient kingdoms. The Ghana Empire, dominated by the Soninke people and centered in the area along the Malian-Mauritanian frontier, was a powerful trading state from about A.D. 700 to 1075. The Malinke Kingdom of Mali, from which the republic takes its name, had its origins on the upper Niger River in the 11th century. Expanding rapidly in the 13th century under the leadership of Soundiata Keita, it reached its height about 1325, when it conquered Timbuktu and Gao. Thereafter, the kingdom began to decline, and by the 15th century it controlled only a small fraction of its former domain.

The Songhai Empire expanded its power from its center in Gao during the period 1465–1530. At its peak under Askia Mohammad I, it encompassed the Hausa states as far as Kano (in present-day Nigeria) and much of the territory that had belonged to the Mali Empire in the west. This kingdom was destroyed by a Moroccan invasion in 1591.

French military penetration of the Soudan, the French name for the area, began from Senegal on the west coast around 1880. Ten years later, the French made a concerted effort to occupy the interior. The timing and method of their advances were determined by resident military governors. A French civilian governor of Soudan was appointed in 1893, but resistance to French control was not eliminated until 1898, when the Malinke warrior, Samory Toure, was defeated after 7 years of war. The French attempted to rule indirectly, but in many areas, they disregarded traditional authorities and governed through appointed chiefs instead. As part of the colony of Soudan, Mali was administered with other French colonial territories as the Federation of French West Africa.

In early 1957, as a result of France's Basic Law (*Loi Cadre*), the Territorial Assembly obtained extensive powers over internal affairs and was permitted to form a cabinet with executive authority over matters within the assembly's competence. After the 1958 French constitutional referendum, Soudan became a member of the French Community and enjoyed complete internal autonomy.

In January 1959, Soudan joined Senegal to form the Mali Federation, which became fully independent within the French Community on June 20, 1960. The federation collapsed on August 20, 1960, when Senegal seceded. On September 22, Soudan proclaimed itself the Republic of Mali and withdrew from the French Community.

President Modibo Keita, whose party, the Union Soudanaise, had dominated preindependence politics, moved quickly to declare a single-party state and pursue a socialist policy based on extensive nationalization. A continuously deteriorating economy led to a decision to rejoin the Franc Zone in 1967 and modify some of the economic excesses.

On November 19, 1968, following mounting discontent, a group of young

READEX FICHE best copy available

officers staged a bloodless coup and set up a 14-member Military Committee for National Liberation (CMLN) with Lt. Moussa Traore as president. The military leaders renounced socialism and attempted to pursue economic reforms but for several years faced debilitating internal political struggles and the disastrous Sahelian drought.

The first moves toward a return to civilian rule occurred in 1974 when a new constitution was approved, but the military leaders declared they would remain in power for 5 more years to implement the political transition. In September 1976, a new political party was established—the Democratic Union of the Malian People (UDPM)—based on the concept of nonideological democratic centralism. Presidential and legislative elections took place in June 1979, when Traore received 99% of the votes and became the first president under the new constitution. Students protesting the lack of future employment opportunities and affiliation with the new party led to riots in January 1980, prompting the government to close post-secondary institutions through June 1981. Student problems, coupled with three coup attempts at about the same time, gave the appearance that efforts to move away from a military government were doomed.

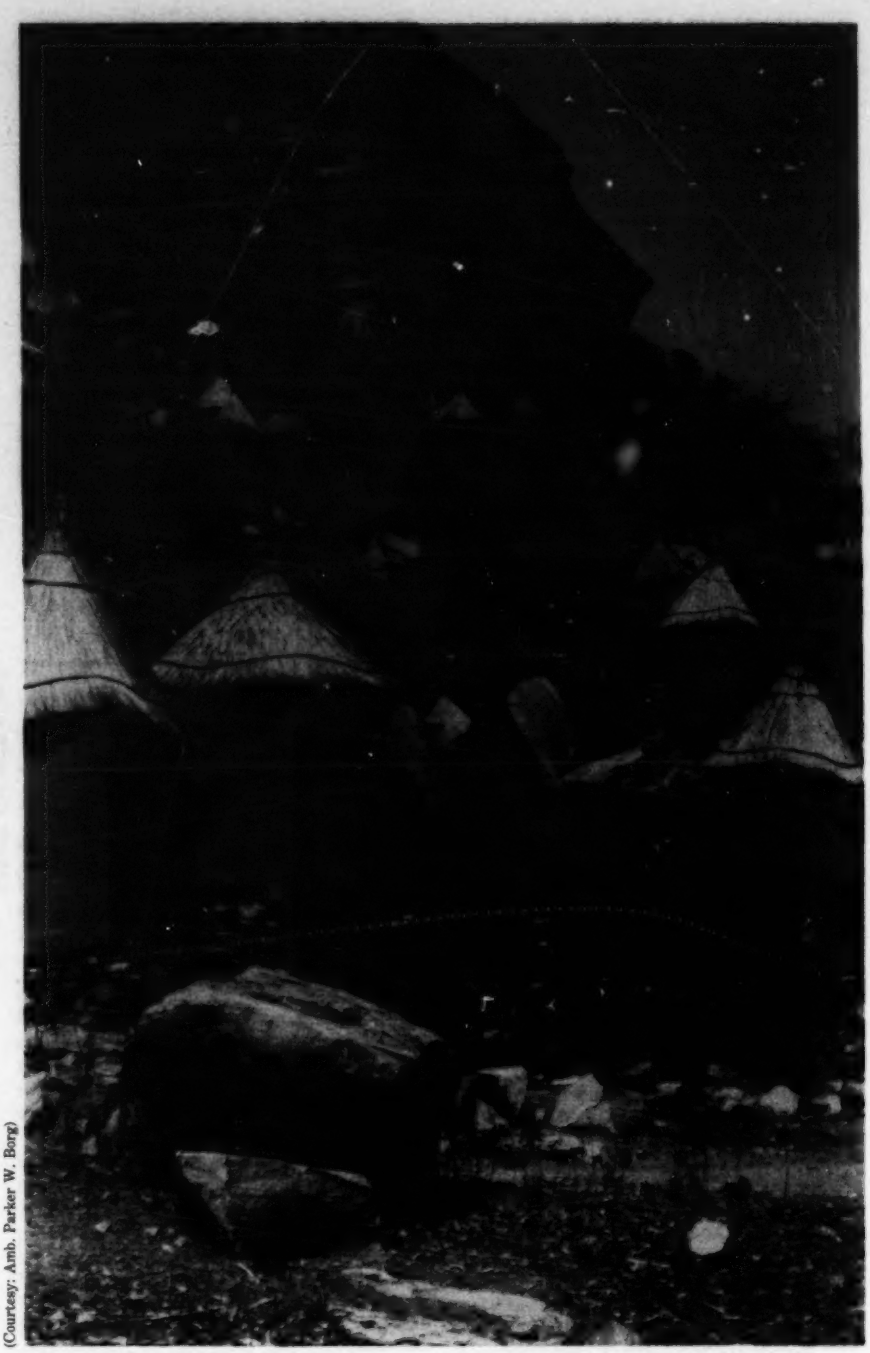
The political situation stabilized during 1981 and 1982. Students and teachers jailed in the 1980 riots were released, and the following academic years proceeded quietly. The UDPM began attracting additional members as it demonstrated that it could offer an effective voice against the excesses of local administrative authorities.

Supported by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, and Western donors, Mali has made significant progress over the past 5 years in reforming a discredited socialist economy. It has successfully accomplished the following:

- Undertaken three IMF standby arrangements;
- Joined the West African Monetary Union and the Central Bank of West Africa;
- Liberalized cereal marketing; and
- Reorganized public finances.

In recognition of the government's commitment to improved economic policy, Mali became the first African government to receive U.S. Government funds for economic policy reform.

The recurring Sahelian drought is the single largest constraint on economic development. The United States assisted Mali in avoiding major food shortages by contributing more than 140,000 metric tons of cereal from 1983 to 1985. Although increased rainfall suggests that the drought has ended, government and international donors continue to seek ways to improve food production that could help Mali avoid the devastating cycle of drought and famine.



(Courtesy: Amb. Parker W. Borg)

A Dogon village in the Bandiagara Cliff region.

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS

The president is chief of state, head of government, secretary general of Mali's sole political party, and minister of defense. Gen. Moussa Traore was re-elected president for a 6-year term in 1985. The Cabinet consists of 17 ministers nominated by and reporting to the president. The Cabinet or Council of Ministers also administers government policies.

The National Assembly is the sole legislative arm of the government. Its 137 members—deputies—are apportioned one for every 60,000 inhabitants of Mali's districts known as *cercles*. Elections took place in 1979, 1982, and 1985 for deputies serving 3-year terms. The National Assembly meets for two regular sessions each year, during which it considers the budget and other issues. The National Assembly debates proposed legislation in closed sessions and offers confidential advice to the government, but it has never been known to reject legislation.

According to the constitution, Mali's sole political party, the Democratic Union of the Malian People (UDPM), is the country's supreme political authority. A 19-member Central Executive Bureau (BEC) directs party activities at the Cabinet level and takes precedence over the Cabinet. The BEC is the most powerful political institution in the country. The party structure parallels the structure of the government from the local to national level. Its objective is to mobilize the population and articulate the popular will. Its most recent elections in 1984–85 were open to all party members desiring to run, and many posts were actively contested by multiple candidates. Secretary General Traore was reelected during the Party Congress in March 1985.

Administratively, Mali is divided into seven regions and the capital district of Bamako, each under the authority of an appointed governor. Each region consists of from five to nine districts, or *cercles*, administered by commandants. *Cercles* are divided into *arrondissements* and *arrondissements* into villages. Military officers hold most of the positions as governor and occasional posts at the *cercle* and *arrondissement* level. Larger towns elect their own municipal councils and mayors.

Mali's legal system is based on codes inherited at independence from France. New laws have been enacted to make the system conform to Malian life, but French colonial laws not abrogated still have the force of law. The judicial system is an arm of, rather than independent from, the executive. The apex of the judicial structure is the Supreme Court.

Principal Government Officials

President; Minister of National Defense—Gen. Moussa Traore

Ministers

State for Planning—Gen. Amadou Baba Diara
Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation—Alioune Blondin Beye
Natural Resources and Livestock—Mady Diallo
Agriculture—Lt. Col. Issa Ongoiba
National Education—Lt. Col. Sekou Ly
Public Health and Social Affairs—Dr. Mamadou Dembele
Finance—Dianka Kaba Diakite
Information and Telecommunications—Gakou Fatou Niang
Sports, Arts, and Culture—Ahmed Ag Hamani
Transport and Public Works—Mamadou Haidara
State Firms and Enterprises—Oumar Coulibaly
Interior—Lt. Col. Abderhamane Maiga
Labor and Civil Service—Modibo Keita
Industrial Development and Tourism—Djibril Diallo
Justice and Keeper of the Seals—Diango Cissoko

Ambassador to the United States—Lassana Keita
Ambassador to the United Nations—Seydou Niare

Mali maintains an embassy in the United States at 2130 R Street, NW., Washington, D.C. 20008 (tel. 202-332-2250), and a permanent mission to the United Nations at 111 E. 69th Street, New York, N.Y. 10020.

Travel Notes

Climate and clothing: Summer clothing is suitable for Bamako. Sturdy shoes are needed because of sand, gravel, mud, and unpaved roads.

Customs: A visa is required for entry, but an airport visa can be purchased upon arrival. A CFA 10,000 fee must be paid to the Malian Tourist Agency, SMERT, after arrival in the country to permit internal travel. Yellow fever and cholera inoculations are required of all visitors. Health requirements change; check latest information. Normally, an exit visa is required after a stay of several days.

Health: Malaria suppressives are strongly recommended. Several doctors are available in Bamako, but medical facilities are limited. Bring a supply of any needed medication; local pharmacies do not always carry even simple remedies. Insects, rats, and rabies are prevalent. Tapwater is not potable and should be boiled and filtered. Avoid local dairy products. Meats should be thoroughly cooked.

Telecommunications: Long-distance telephone service is sometimes unsatisfactory, and local telegraphic service is unreliable. Mali is on Greenwich mean time, 5 hours ahead of eastern standard time.

Transportation: Privately owned automobiles are the principal means of transportation in Bamako for Americans. Bus service is unreliable. Taxis are available at stands, and fares are inexpensive. The road between Bamako and Mopti and those branching south to Bougouni and Sikasso are paved. Other roads are of laterite and usually passable in the dry season without four-wheel drive. Depending on the seasons, between two and four flights a week arrive in Bamako from Paris. From New York, the best connections are made at Dakar or Paris.

Tourist attractions: The best time to travel to Mali is during the cool season, November-February. Mali is also comfortable during the rainy season from June to September, but transportation is less reliable. Mali has some of West Africa's most scenic country and a growing tourist business, but individual transport is very expensive. Trips are still quite difficult to arrange. Photo permits are necessary but can usually be obtained in 1 or 2 days.

National holidays: Businesses and the US Embassy may be closed on the following Malian holidays:

New Year's Day	January 1
Prophet's Baptism	*
Army Day	January 20
Easter Monday	March 31
Labor Day	May 1
Day of Africa	May 25
Ramadan	*
Tabaski	*
Independence Day	September 22
Mawloud	*
Liberation Day	November 19
Christmas	December 25

*Lunar holidays are subject to variations each year.

ECONOMY

Mali's per capita gross national product (GNP) of $190 places it among the world's 10 poorest nations. Although Mali's potential wealth lies in the production of agricultural commodities, livestock, and fish, the sector is underdeveloped. Agricultural activities occupy 73% of the work force and provide 43% of the gross domestic product. Small-scale traditional farming dominates the agricultural sector, with subsistence farming on about 90% of the 1.4 million hectares (3.4 million acres) under cultivation.

The most productive agricultural area lies along the banks of the Niger River between Bamako and Mopti, extending south to the borders of Ivory Coast and Burkina Faso. Average rainfall varies in this region from 50.8 centimeters per year (20 in.) around Mopti to 139.7 centimeters (55 in.) in the south near the Ivory Coast frontier. This river basin and southern agricultural area are most important for the production of cotton, millet, corn, vegetables, and tree crops.

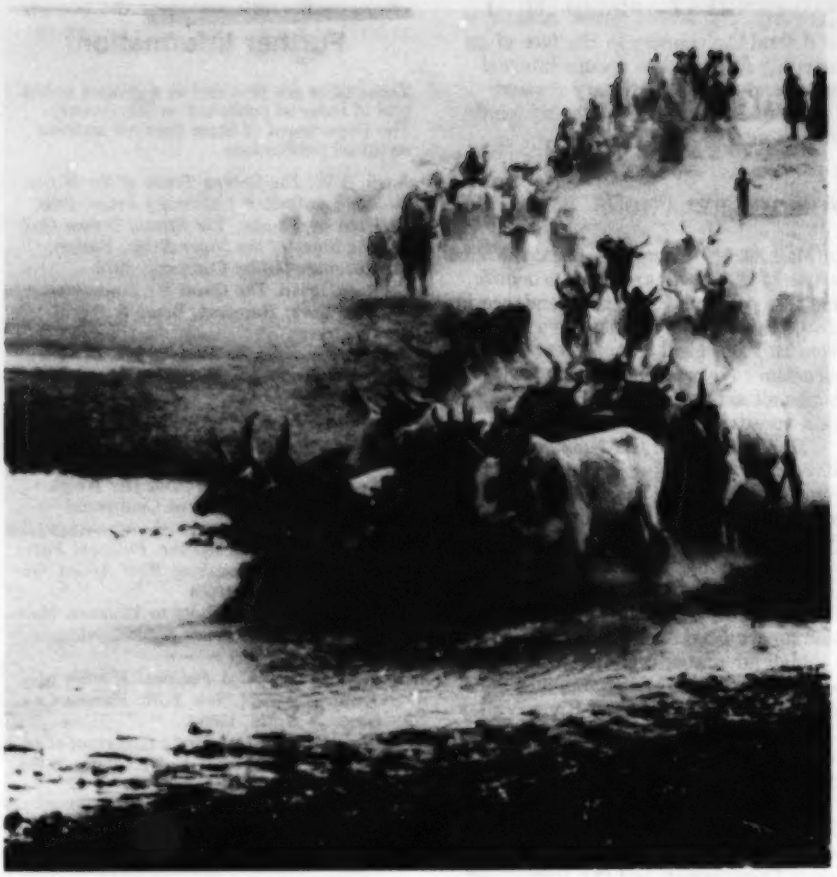
Rice is grown extensively along the banks of the Niger between Segou and Mopti. The most important rice-producing area is at the site of the Office du Niger, located along and north of the Niger River. Using water diverted from the Niger, the Office du Niger irrigates about 40,000 hectares of land for rice and sugarcane production.

The Niger River is an important source of fish for Mali and neighboring countries. Sorghum is planted extensively in the drier parts of the country and along the inland delta of the Niger.

Large herds of goat, sheep, and livestock are Mali's greatest resource after cropland. The Sahelian droughts of 1973–74 and 1983–85, however, have depleted the herds. Livestock normally accounts for one-quarter of export receipts and are raised in all parts of the country, generally by nomadic herders but increasingly by other groups. The largest concentration of cattle are in the areas north of Bamako and Segou extending into the Niger delta. Sheep and goats are raised in the dry areas north and east of Timbuktu.

In the past, Mali has been self-sufficient in grains—millet, sorghum, rice, and corn. However, diminished harvests during bad years, a growing population, and changing dietary habits have resulted in grain deficits almost every year since 1965.

The critical factor each year for Mali's agriculture is rainfall, which over the last 20 years has decreased and become more erratic. In 1983 and 1985, Mali was devastated by its second major drought. Only generous food aid from the United States and from other international donors prevented severe deprivation and starvation.



(Courtesy: Amb. Parker W. Borg)

Driving cattle across the Bani River to feed on inland delta grasses.

Deposits of various ores—bauxite, uranium, iron, copper, and manganese—exist but are not mined because of Mali's inadequate transportation and power facilities. Gold is mined by traditional nonmechanized methods by a Malian-Soviet consortium. A large French firm and the UN Development Program are carrying out extensive gold explorations in the west and south of Mali.

During the colonial period, private capital investment was virtually nonexistent, and public investment was devoted largely to the Office du Niger irrigation scheme and to administrative overhead. Since independence, however, Mali has built some light industries with the help of various donors. Manufacturing, consisting principally of processed agricultural products, accounts for about 15% of the gross domestic product.

Mali's major exports are cotton and cattle. Imports, which are about double the value of exports, are principally cereals and petroleum. International grant assistance has allowed Mali to carry out development projects and contain losses from the Sahelian droughts. Principal donors include the European Economic Community, the World Bank, UN agencies, the United States, France, the Federal Republic of Germany, and China. Mali joined the West African Monetary Union and the Central Bank of West Africa in 1984. At that time, the country adopted the CFA (*Communaute Financiere Africaine*) currency which is freely convertible.

DEFENSE

Mali maintains an army and an air force, relying primarily on the Soviet Union for materiel and training. Small numbers of Malians receive military training in the United States, France, and West

Germany. The armed forces' mission is to defend the country in the face of an invading force and to ensure internal order and security. Military expenditures equal about 17% of the national budget or 3% of GNP.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

In Mali, as elsewhere in Africa, the vital issues of the 1980s are more economic and less political. Since independence in 1960, Malian governments have shifted from an ideological commitment to socialism to a pragmatism that welcomes all aid donors and encourages private investment.

Mali is active in the Nonaligned Movement and follows a nonaligned foreign policy, seeking a broad range of contacts with East and West. Although Western embassies at Bamako are outnumbered by missions from communist countries, Mali's relations with the United States and other Western nations are good.

Mali advocates regional economic cooperation. With Mauritania and Senegal, it formed the Senegal River Valley Development Organization. Other regional economic organizations with Malian participation include the Liptako-Gourma Authority, which seeks to develop the contiguous areas of Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso; the Niger River Commission; and the Permanent Interstate Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel. Mali also belongs to the West African Economic Community and the Economic Community of West African States—organizations that seek to reduce West African trade barriers. Mali is active in the Organization of African Unity and the United Nations and several of its specialized agencies.

Further Information

These titles are provided as a general indication of material published on this country. The Department of State does not endorse unofficial publications.

Bovil, E.W. *The Golden Trade of the Moors.* London: Oxford University Press, 1958.

DeGramont, Sanche. *The Strong Brown God: The Story of the Niger River.* Boston: Houghton-Mifflin Company, 1976.

Gardner, Brian. *The Quest for Timbuktoo.* New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1968.

Hargreaves, John D. *West Africa: The Former French States.* New York: Prentice-Hall, 1967.

Imperato, P.K. *A Wind in Africa.* St. Louis: Warren Green, 1975.

Jones, William I. *Planning and Economic Policy: Socialist Mali and Her Neighbors.* Washington: Three Continents Press, 1976.

Morgenthau, Ruth Schachter. *Political Parties in French-Speaking West Africa.* Oxford: Clarendon, 1965.

Ouologuem, Yambo. *Bound to Violence.* New York: Harcourt, Brace & Jovanovich, 1971.

Rotberg, Robert A. *A Political History of Tropical Africa.* New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1965.

Snyder, Frank G. *One-Party Government in Mali.* New Haven: Yale University Press, 1965.

Zolberg, Aristide R. *Creating Political Order: The Party-States of West Africa.* Chicago: Rand McNally, 1966.

U.S.-MALIAN RELATIONS

Relations between the United States and Mali are good. The USAID (U.S. Agency for International Development) program encourages the government to ensure continued stability and to promote development by concentrating its resources in three principal areas:

- Acceleration of policy reform by improving agricultural organization;
- Improved management by upgrading human resources through training; and
- Strengthened research by expansion and improvement of farm delivery systems.

In addition, USAID is resettling about 11,000 farmers who will lose their homes as a result of the construction of the Manantali Dam, which is part of the Senegal River Basin Development Program being carried out by Mali, Senegal, and Mauritania. An active Peace Corps program of about 80 volunteers also supports the government's development goals in agriculture and health.

Principal U.S. Officials

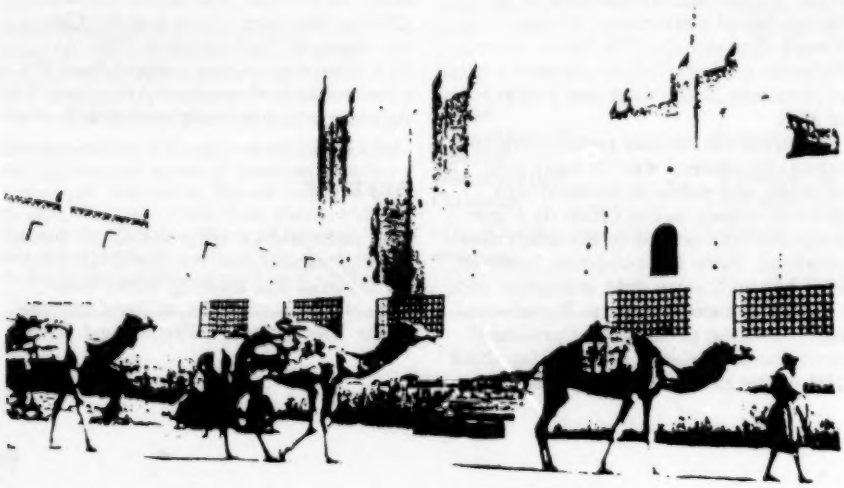
Ambassador—Robert J. Ryan, Jr.
Counselor of the Embassy—William H. Twaddell
Political Officer—Barbara Presgrove
Economic Officer—Vicki Huddleston
Public Affairs Officer (USIS)—Arlene Jacquette
Director, AID Mission—Eugene R. Chiavaroli

The U.S. Embassy in Mali is located at Rue Testard and Rue Mohamed V, Bamako (tel. 22-58-34). The mailing address is B.P. 34, Bamako. ■

Published by the United States Department of State • Bureau of Public Affairs • Office of Public Communication • Editorial Division • Washington, D.C. • April 1986
Editor: Juanita Adams

Department of State Publication 8056
Background Notes Series • This material is in the public domain and may be reproduced without permission; citation of this source would be appreciated.

For sale by the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402



Carrying blocks of salt, a camel caravan arrives in the town of Goundam.
(Courtesy: Amb. Parker W. Borg)